

PATH TO IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT FOR COMPANIES IN THE SAN FELIPE CREATIVE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of research aimed at designing a path to improve those factors that can positively affect the competitiveness of the companies of the cultural sector located in the Creative District of San Felipe. It starts with the description of the companies of the area, considering only art galleries. This is a qualitative, descriptive study, in which 14 businesspeople participated in an interview that included aspects regarding marketing, staff retention, and factors that influence financial decisions. The results show that businesspeople know the industry and the business mainly from their experience as businesspeople and that, overall, there is a lack of application of scientific management tools that would allow their companies to grow in the market.

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1. Introduction

Cultural and creative enterprises are becoming increasingly important in the economy. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (2023), these enterprises represent 3.1% of the global economy and contribute 6.2% of employment.

In Colombia, Law 1834 of 2017, also known as the Orange Law, states that

the creative industries encompass the publishing, audiovisual, phonographic, visual arts, performing arts and entertainment, tourism and tangible and intangible cultural heritage, arts and cultural education, design, advertising, multimedia content, content software and interactive audiovisual services, fashion, news agencies and information services, and creative education sectors (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2017).

Within Colombia, the capital city, Bogotá, accounts for 74% of the country's creative industries (Invest in Bogotá, 2023). According to the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce (2023), there are 27,284 formalised cultural and creative enterprises in the city, employing 131,349 direct workers. This indicates that each company employs an average of 4.81 workers, meaning that it is a sector composed mainly of micro-enterprises. Micro-enterprises represent 95.3% of companies in Colombia (Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, 2023). In Bogotá, the creative and cultural sector has been growing steadily, as evidenced by the fact that in 2023 the sector employed 216,740 people, representing a growth of 6.8% between 2022 and 2023. Of these jobs, 38.7% were held by women, and 192,408 employees were full-time, with the number of full-time workers growing by 1.6% between 2022 and 2023 (Secretariat of Culture, Recreation and Sport, 2024).

In economic terms, in 2023 in Bogotá, the cultural and creative sector had a total production of US\$8.9 billion, with intermediate consumption of US\$4.5 billion, representing 5.5% of the added value and 4.8% of the city's gross domestic product; its share of the city's economy was greater than that of sectors such as construction (Secretariat of Culture, Recreation and Sport, 2024).

The above figures show a growing, dynamic sector with a wide range of subsectors within this industry. It is therefore vitally important for the sector to analyse what is happening within its companies in order to help improve their competitiveness, thereby accelerating this growth.

Bogotá's creative industries have been analysed, and their situation has been recorded at the macro level. However, at the micro level, there are no studies indicating the situation of these companies or how they are being managed. Given that most of these companies are small, with few employees, the risk of leaving the market or stagnating is high. This is because small companies have less access to resources in the formal financial market and less financial capacity of their own to deal with contingencies or leverage growth projects.

Companies must have adequate management in order to grow and be sustainable in the market. Sierra-Pérez et al. (2022) state that business management has become the foundation of sustainable economic development for SMEs. The factors that are fundamental to administrative management are administrative, international, technical, legal, accounting, and financial in nature (Pereira Bolaños, 2019). For a company's administrative management to be successful, the administrator must have the skills and apply the administrative techniques that will enable the company to be sustainable in the long term. It is therefore important to have adequate knowledge of the state of business management in order to identify opportunities for improvement that will increase competitiveness, thereby increasing a country's levels of growth and development.

Given this situation, the authors proposed a study to investigate the situation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Bogotá at the micro level, determining how they are managed in order to subsequently provide a roadmap for improvement that will enable them to enhance their management levels and equip them with more appropriate tools to face the challenges posed by the market. This article presents the results of the first phase of the research study, which focused exclusively on companies in the cultural industry. Given that the San Felipe Creative District was

created in Bogotá, the researchers decided to begin their study by characterising the management of companies in this area, which provides the initial input for subsequently designing a route for management improvement.

The overall objective of the research is to design a model for improving the internal factors that affect the competitiveness of Bogotá's MSMEs, and a specific objective of the research is to analyse the current state of the internal management factors that affect the competitiveness of Bogotá's MSMEs. Given that the range of companies is quite broad, the researchers decided to initially study cultural companies and then investigate other sectors of the city's economy.

2. Methodology

The methodology chosen by the authors to carry out their study is presented below.

2.1. Type of Study

The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature.

According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres (2018), exploratory studies are carried out in cases where the research problem is new or has been little studied; these studies serve to obtain information that leads to more comprehensive and in-depth subsequent research. In the specific case of cultural enterprises in Bogotá, as mentioned in the introduction to this article, there are analyses and figures regarding macro aspects of the sector (such as added value, gross domestic product, number of employees, etc.), but there is no information describing the enterprises as individual units or explaining in depth what happens within them. This is why this study is considered exploratory in nature.

Descriptive studies specify characteristics and profiles of individuals, groups, communities, etc., and are useful for accurately showing the dimensions of the object of study (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres (2018). Given that this study initially seeks to characterise the management of cultural enterprises in the San Felipe District, it is considered a descriptive study.

2.2. Approach

The approach of the study is qualitative in nature.

Qualitative studies are useful for understanding phenomena from the point of view of those who experience them and for seeking differences between how the same experience can have different meanings for different people (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres, 2018).

The researchers propose a qualitative research path with the aim of studying in detail how businesspeople view the management of their companies. Similarly, given the size of the population and sample, and the close geographical location of the participants, it was decided that a qualitative research path would be appropriate in order to obtain in-depth information from each of the participants.

2.3. Population and Sample

To determine the size of the population, in February 2024 the authors consulted the online page of the San Felipe Cultural and Creative District, finding a list of 28 art galleries. Subsequently, in September 2024, before beginning the fieldwork, the authors toured all the streets of the district, confirming this number of galleries. However, it should be noted that at the time of writing this article (September 2025), when reviewing the official online page of the San Felipe District, 27 galleries, spaces, and workshops are listed. In addition to being located in the district and belonging to the cultural and creative business sector, the businesses had to be formal, duly registered with the respective chamber of commerce. Companies located within the geographical area comprising the district but which were informal or did not belong to the cultural enterprise sector (e.g., grocery stores, bakeries, or courier agencies) were excluded from the study. Informal companies were also not included.

For the study, given that the research was limited to a well-defined geographical area with a small number of businesses, the researchers sought to reach 100% of the businesses. However, the desired number was not achieved, as some business owners declined to participate in the study. Finally, 14 businesspeople who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed, constituting a sample of voluntary participants. In other words, non-probabilistic sampling was used, which is a type of sampling used in qualitative studies.

2.4. Information Collection Techniques

To conduct the study, the researchers applied a structured in-depth interview, which was answered by the businesspeople participating in the study.

The qualitative interview is seen as a meeting to exchange information between the interviewer and the interviewee(s); in the case of the structured qualitative interview, the interviewer follows a guide of specific questions and sticks to these questions, asking all interviewees the same questions in the same order (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres, 2018).

The interview consisted of 16 questions divided into two parts. The first six questions sought to characterise the businessperson in order to determine their characteristics in terms of level of education attained, previous size of their company, and experience as a businessperson before starting the cultural enterprise under study. The second part of the questions focused on finding out how the businessperson runs their company. The interview focused mainly on market aspects, reviewing the businessperson's actions in relation to their competition, sector, and customers. It also inquired about staff retention, choice of suppliers, and aspects taken into account when making financial decisions. The interviews were conducted with the participating businesspeople between October and November 2024, at their business premises.

2.5 Information Analysis Techniques

Given the research objectives and the methodology applied, the researchers used descriptive statistical data analysis. The descriptive statistics for each research variable refer to the number of cases that occurred in the variables, with the aim of determining any trends that may arise (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres, 2018).

The results presented are shown in two types of figures: for those questions where there was only one possible answer, the figures with the results are presented in pie chart form, with answers in percentages; for those questions where businesspeople could indicate more than one answer, the figures are presented in bar chart form, with response frequencies.

The answers to the questions were open-ended; for ease of presentation of the results, the authors took the central ideas from each answer and grouped them into categories, which are presented below.

The responses from the interviews were collected, and the main idea from each of the responses from each of the participants was then taken to facilitate the presentation of the results. The results were analysed in percentages when only one answer was possible and in response frequency when there was the possibility of finding more than one factor in the businessperson's response.

3. Results

The results obtained during the study are presented below. The survey results are divided into two parts: the first shows information regarding the characterisation of the businesspeople, their entrepreneurial experience and the size of their companies, and the second shows how businesspeople manage their companies.

The results are presented in two types of figures: for questions where only one answer was possible, the results are presented in pie charts, with answers in percentages; for questions where

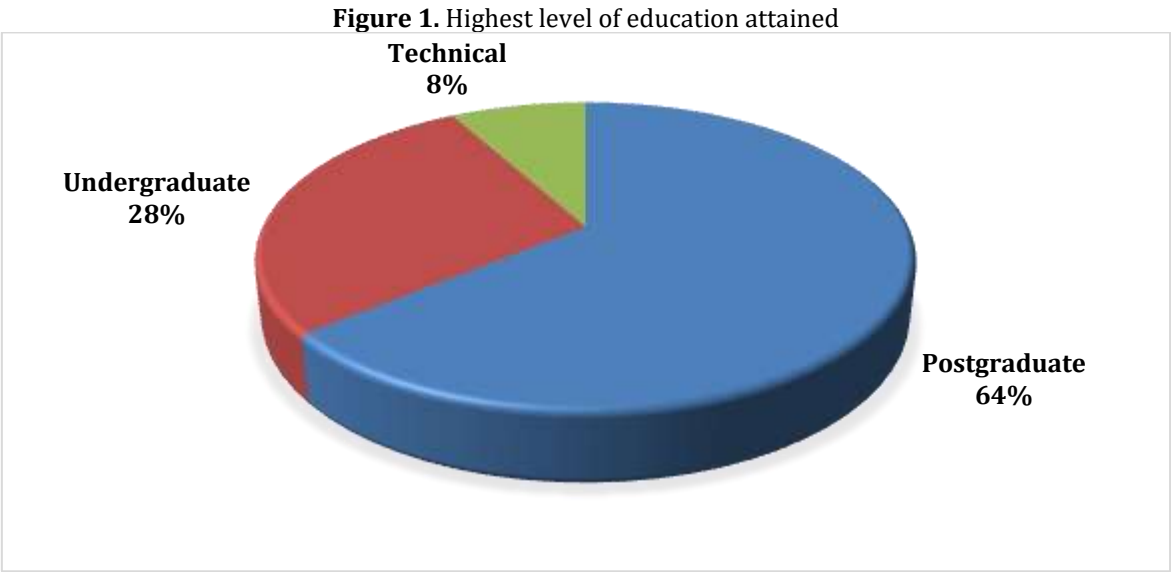
businesspeople could select more than one answer, the results are presented in bar charts, with response frequency.

The answers to the questions were open-ended; for ease of presentation of the results, the authors took the central ideas from each answer and grouped them into categories, which are presented below.

3.1. Basic Characterisation

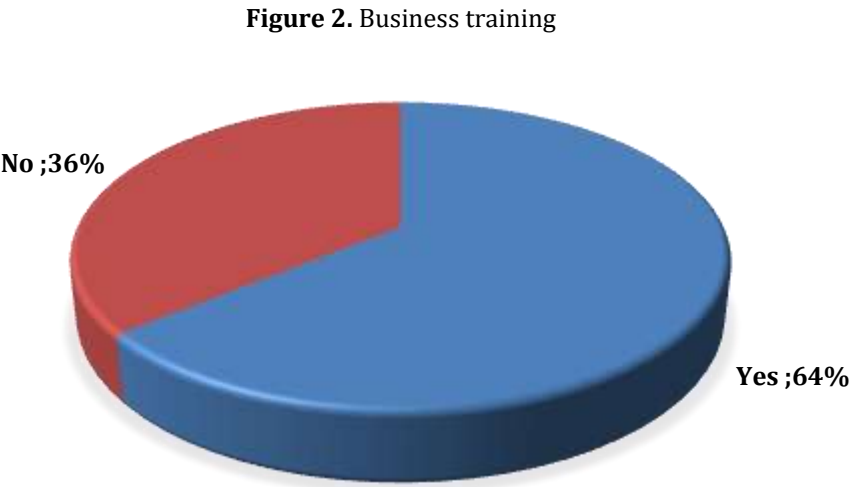
The first part of the results focuses on describing the businesspeople who participated in the study. This data relates to their business education, their prior knowledge at the time of starting their venture, and the size of their companies.

Figure 1 shows the highest level of education attained by the businesspeople. Ninety-two per cent of the businesspeople have a university degree, either undergraduate, specialisation, or master's, while 8% have attained a technical level of education.



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

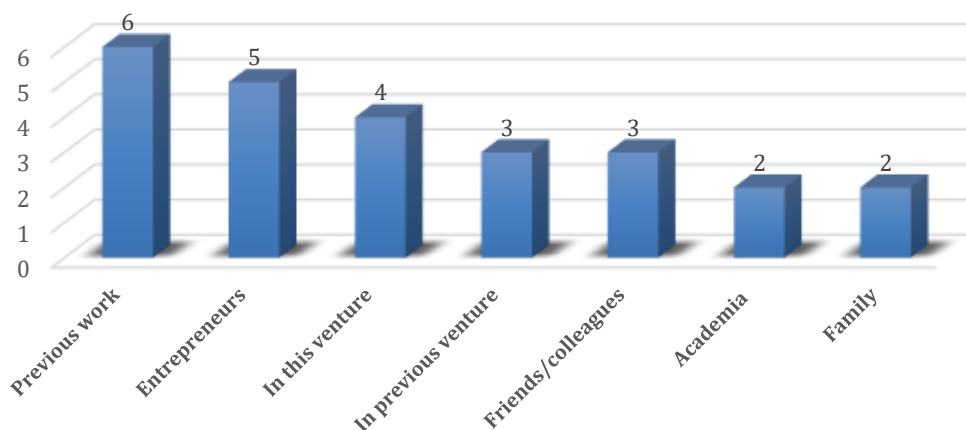
Sixty-four per cent of the businesspeople surveyed stated that they had some type of training in business matters, while 36 per cent stated that they did not.



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 3 shows the responses given by businesspeople when asked about their main sources of knowledge on business-related matters. Businesspeople cited previous jobs, other businesspeople, and their own experience in their current company as their main sources. Academia was one of the main sources for two businesspeople. Friends and family were mentioned by five businesspeople.

Figure 3. Main sources of business knowledge



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Businesspeople were asked whether, before starting their current business (or purchasing it, if applicable), they had conducted any preliminary research to help them make an investment decision. Seventy-one per cent said they had, compared to 29 per cent who had not.

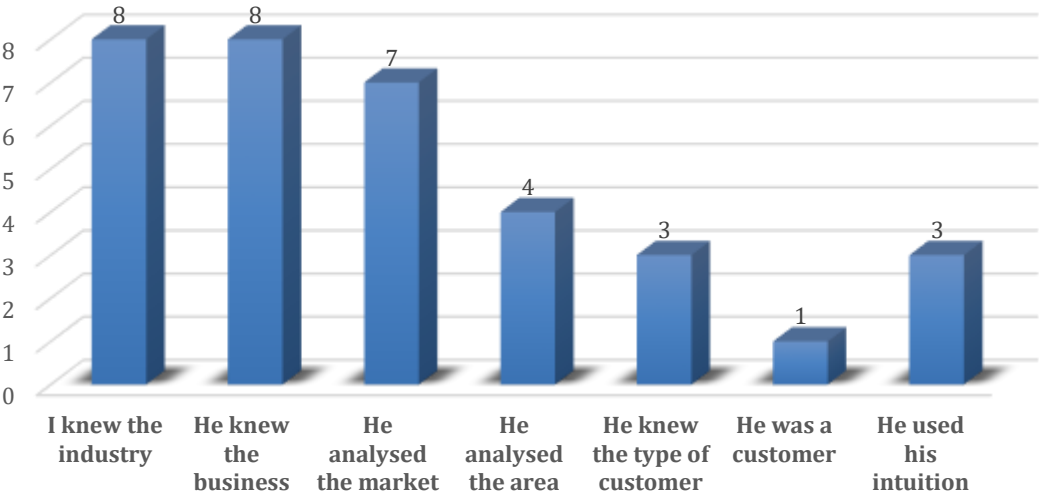
Figure 4. Prior entrepreneurial research



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Businesspeople were asked what kind of knowledge they had or what kind of analysis they had carried out before starting their business. Most said they already knew the industry or type of business. Fifty per cent said they had analysed the market, and four businesspeople said they had analysed the area. Three said they already knew the area, and one of them was a customer who decided to start a business. Three businesspeople said they had used their intuition.

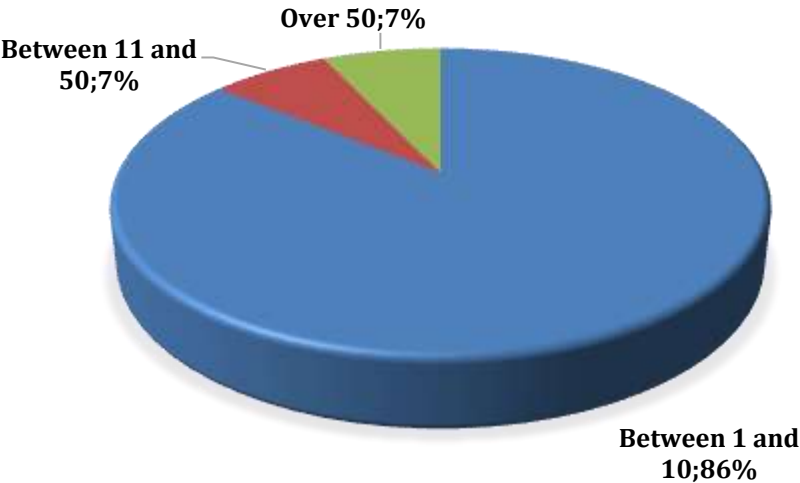
Figure 5. Knowledge or analysis prior to starting a business



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Of the 14 businesspeople who participated in the study, 12 employ between 1 and 12 employees, 1 employs between 11 and 50, and 1 employs more than 50 people.

Figure 6. Number of employees in the companies



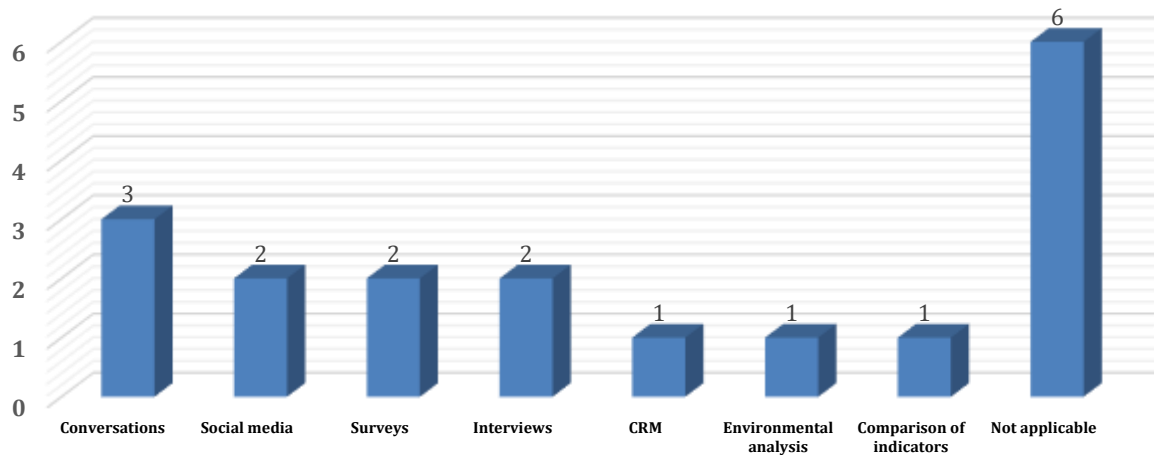
Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

3.2. Current Management of Companies

The second part of the presentation of results focuses on how businesspeople manage their companies, mainly in terms of market management, complemented by financial decisions and human resource management.

Figure 7 shows the ways in which businesspeople conduct market research. Six businesspeople stated that they do not conduct market research. The most commonly used methods for researching the market are informal conversations with customers and reviewing social media. Four businesspeople conduct surveys or interviews.

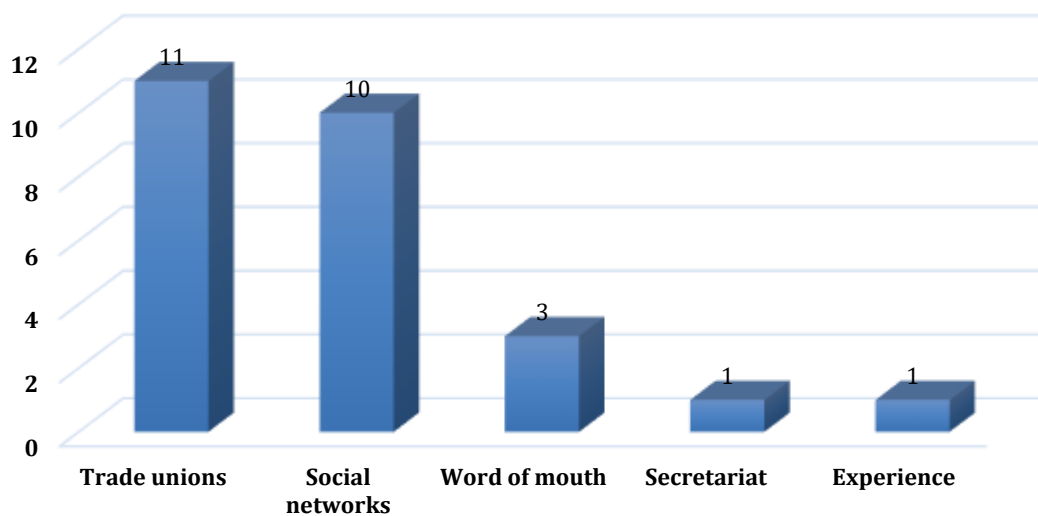
Figure 7. Ways of researching the market



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 8 shows that to research what is happening in the sector, businesspeople mainly use information from trade associations, although social media is also widely used. Information from the Secretariat of Economic Development is used by one businessperson.

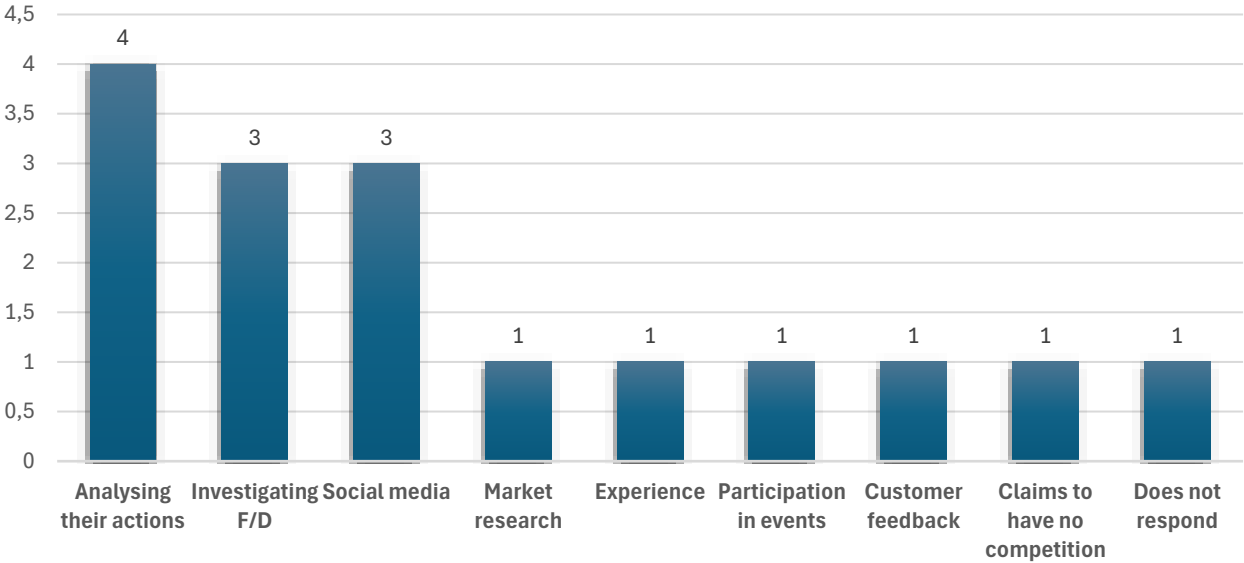
Figure 8. Ways of researching what is happening in the industry



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 9 shows that there are eight responses in which businesspeople say they apply some type of analysis of what is happening with their competition (analysing their actions, researching strengths and weaknesses, and conducting market research). Social media is another source of information that businesspeople use to learn about their competition. One businessperson did not respond to the question.

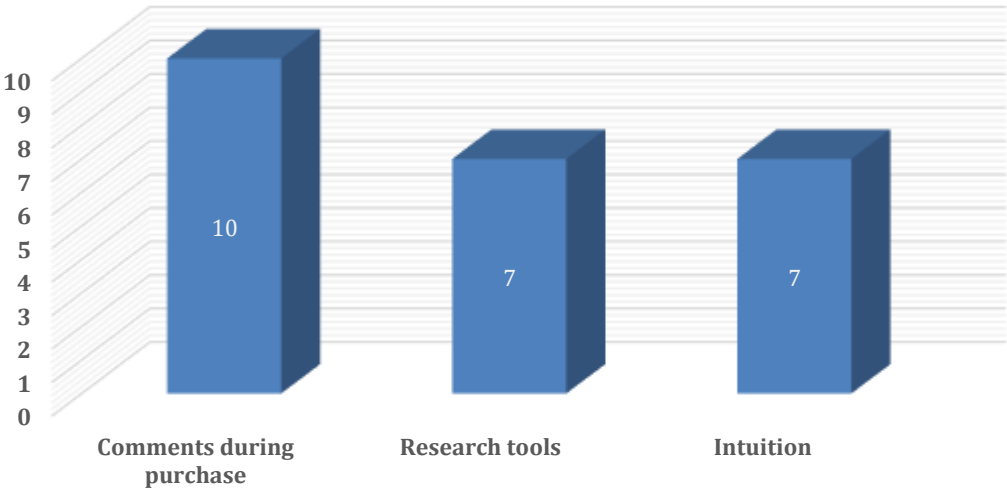
Figure 9. Ways of researching the competition



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 10 shows the ways in which businesspeople identify customer needs. Informal conversations during the purchase are prioritised. Half of the participants say they use some type of research tool, and half say they also rely on intuition.

Figure 10. Ways of identifying customer needs



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 11 shows that 50% of businesspeople conduct after-sales satisfaction surveys.

Figure 11. Conducting customer satisfaction surveys



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 12 shows the ways in which businesspeople determine demand. Half of the participants base their determination on what they see happening in the sector. Product trend reviews, demand histories and price analyses are also used. Four participants said they relied on their intuition.

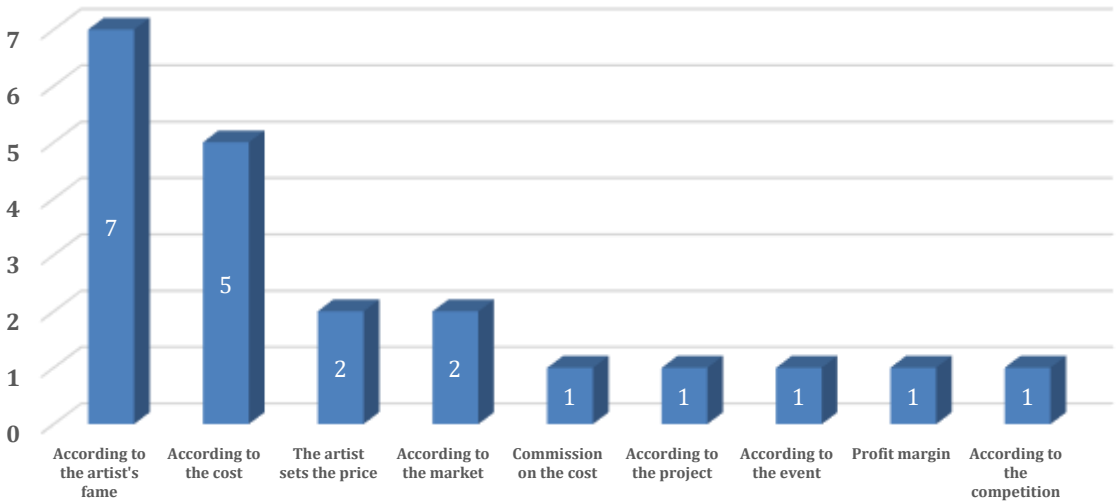
Figure 12. Ways of determining demand



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

The name/fame of the artist, mentioned by seven businesspeople, is the main factor they consider when setting prices. Seven businesspeople also use cost and add a commission/margin to determine the price to charge.

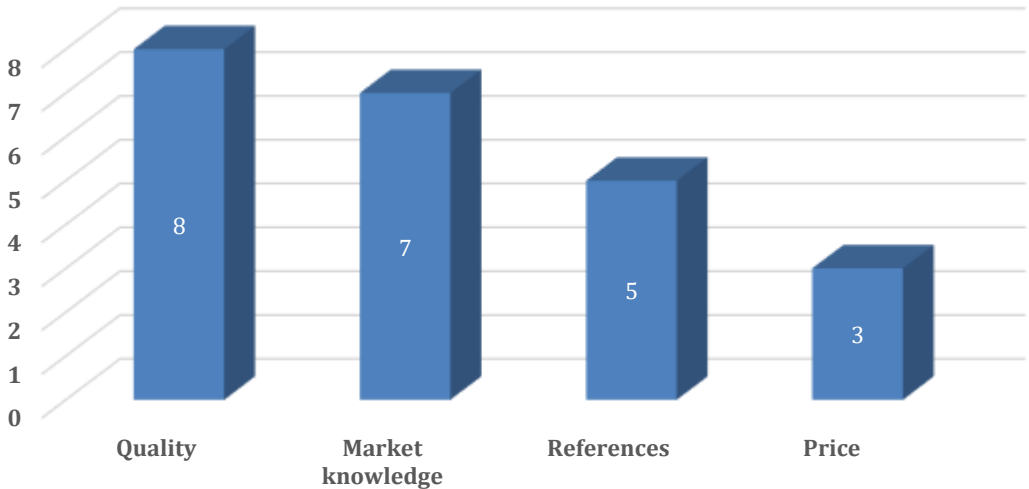
Figure 13. Ways of setting prices



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

The quality of the product supplied is the main factor taken into account when choosing a supplier. Businesspeople also consider the supplier's knowledge of the market, as well as references that other people have given them about suppliers. The factor they consider least is price.

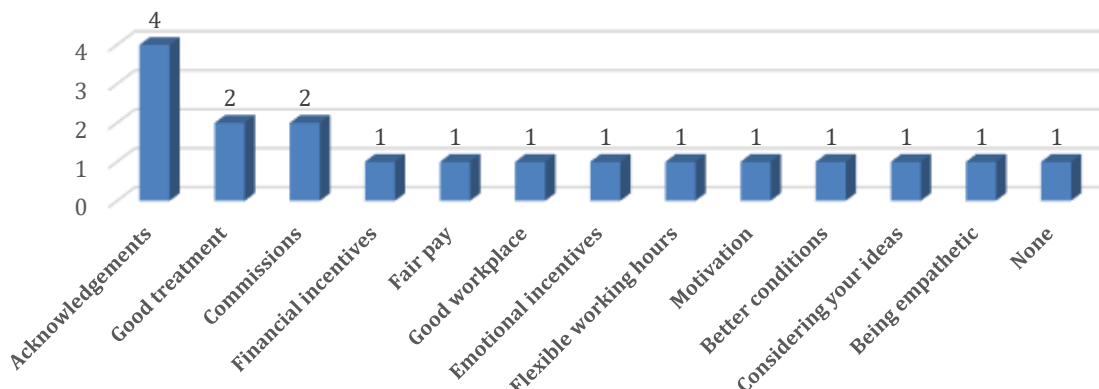
Figure 14. Ways of choosing suppliers



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Recognising the work done by employees is the method most commonly used by employers to retain staff. Motivational aspects are preferred over financial ones. Only one employer stated that they did not take any specific action to retain staff.

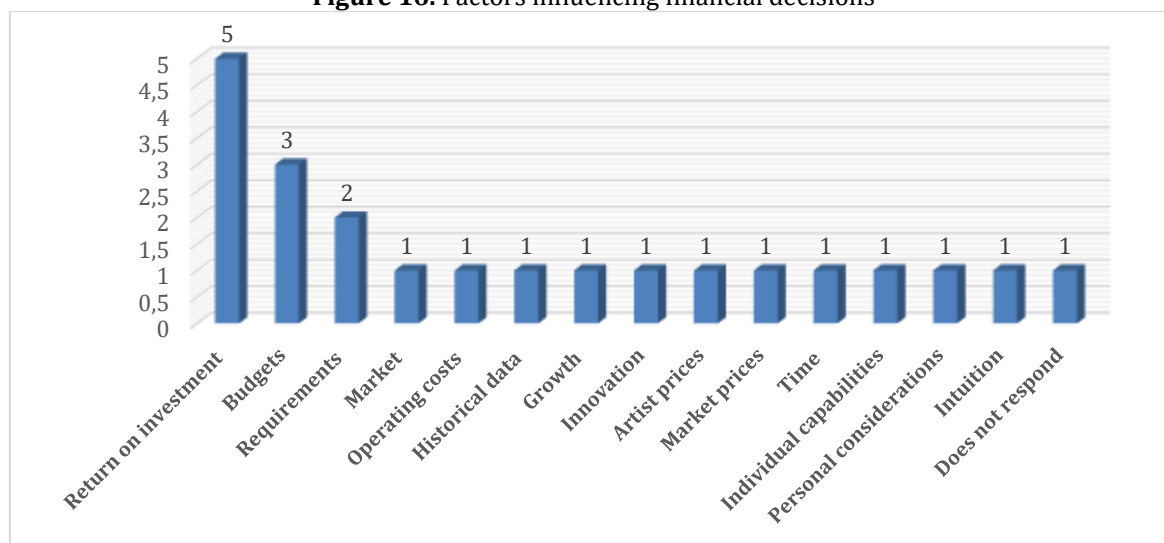
Figure 15. Ways used to retain employees



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

Finally, Figure 16 shows the factors that influence employers' financial decisions. Return on investment is the main factor they consider when making an investment decision. Other factors mentioned include the market and timing. Three employers stated that they take non-financial aspects into account, such as individual capabilities, personal considerations, or intuition.

Figure 16. Factors influencing financial decisions



Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025.

3.3. Analysis of the Information Collected

The analysis of the information collected is presented below.

Although two-thirds of businesspeople reported having had some form of formal education in business matters, only 14% said that academia had been the main source of knowledge they used to run their business. These data should be analysed with caution, as the businesspeople did not specify what type of formal education they had received in these subjects. In general, it can be observed that businesspeople have had previous work experience, previous ventures, and the venture they currently run as the main sources of knowledge they use to manage their business.

Studying an investment opportunity is an action that reduces the risk of making a bad investment. Therefore, before making an investment, it is important to analyse its pros and cons and conduct market research that includes projected demand and financial projections to assess

the project's profitability and its attractiveness as an investment opportunity for the investor. Sixty-one per cent of businesspeople said they had carried out some kind of analysis prior to starting their business, i.e. they went beyond intuition and decided to study one or more factors, or they already had some prior knowledge that allowed them not to start from scratch. Among the things they analysed before starting their business were the district and the market. However, it is noteworthy that no other factors (operations, finances) were mentioned when analysing the venture.

Studying the market to determine trends, demand, opportunities, threats, etc., is a healthy exercise for the company. This can help it anticipate and not fall behind in the market. Six businesspeople stated that they did not carry out any type of market research. It can be observed that a large proportion of businesspeople base their knowledge of the market on informal conversations and what they see on social media. Only two businesspeople stated that they carried out surveys or interviews as a market research tool. With regard to knowledge of the sector, 12 responses from businesspeople show that they seek information published by trade associations or by the Secretariat of Economic Development, which is good practice, given that these publications contain reliable information. However, it was also observed that a significant number of businesspeople use social media as a source of information, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but can lead to bias or the consultation of unverified or unreviewed information, which may lead one to believe that the information found there is reliable.

With regard to the study of the competition, the responses were quite varied. Eight businesspeople stated that they carry out some kind of analysis or research into what their competitors are doing, their strengths or weaknesses, or analyse them through market research. Social media once again appears as a tool used in management, as three businesspeople stated that they analyse their competitors by studying their social media.

Customers are the *raison d'être* of businesses; knowing their expectations and how satisfied they are with the product once it has been purchased is essential in order to continue offering an attractive market mix that retains customers and attracts new buyers. It is important to understand what the customer wants before, during and after the purchase. Most businesspeople stated that they study their customers' needs during the purchasing process through informal conversations with them. This shows that, in general, no market research is being done before the purchase. Seven business owners stated that they rely on intuition to determine customer needs, and seven mentioned that they use some type of information tool. In terms of after-sales service, only half of the business owners conduct some type of customer satisfaction survey.

Determining demand is essential for a company, as it allows it to plan and make projections that reduce the risk of product shortages or excess inventory. When reviewing the responses, intuition reappears as a factor when projecting the quantity of product demand. However, it should be noted that most businesspeople said they would carry out analyses, review product trends and look at historical demand data.

Price is one of the components of the marketing mix and is the most flexible of these, as it can be changed immediately, something that is more difficult to do with a product, promotion, or place. In the case of the businesspeople who participated in the study, the traditional way of determining price is to take a cost and add an expected profit margin. The most common response was to base the price on the artist's name or fame.

Quality was the factor that most businesspeople considered most important when choosing a supplier, with price being the least important factor. It is worth noting that more than a third of businesspeople are guided by references that other people give them about the potential supplier. As such, no mention was made of conducting a preliminary study of market conditions, delivery terms or payment terms as factors to be taken into account when choosing a supplier.

When answering the question about employee retention, the business owners gave varied responses, this being the second question that received the most different answers. In this question, in which business owners could give more than one option, the 14 participating business owners gave answers that were classified into thirteen categories. There were 10 categories that

received only one response. The most frequently repeated response was giving recognition, mentioned by 4 business owners. Good treatment and commissions were mentioned by two employers each. The responses were diverse and can be categorised as economic factors and emotional factors. Economic factors were mentioned five times, while emotional factors were mentioned 11 times, and one employer mentioned that they do not use any benefits to retain employees.

Finally, employers were asked about the factors that influence their financial decisions. This factor, which must be analysed carefully, received a minority of responses related to personal issues or intuition. The most frequently mentioned response was return on investment, followed by budget. Cost and price issues were also mentioned. As with the previous question, this question received a wide variety of responses, with the most different responses being received.

4. Conclusions

This preliminary exploratory study provides a starting point for further research and for beginning to define a path for improvement.

Firstly, it should be made clear that this study has certain limitations and scope. The scope of this study is focused exclusively on creative businesses such as galleries and workshops. Although the study was based exclusively on businesses in the San Fernando Creative District, there are galleries located in other areas of the city, although there is no other place in the city where so many businesses of this type are concentrated. In addition, this district is recognised and is the first attempt to create a space dedicated exclusively to these businesses. While it is true that we cannot speak of a cluster - defined as a vertical grouping of businesses that work and interact in the same sector and in a specific geographical area, with the aim of cooperating with each other to improve their overall competitiveness (Fernández-Souto et al., 2018, p. 93) —there is one characteristic of a cluster that is present, namely geographical proximity. However, these companies are characteristic of the cultural sector (size, product, type of customer), therefore, and given that the study does not deal with issues of geographical location within the city, it can be understood that the results found in these companies may be similar to cultural companies located in other parts of the city.

The study has limitations. Although the population size was small and the proximity allowed all companies to be reached, the fact that not all businesspeople participated is a limitation of the study. This does not invalidate the results, given that the other non-participating companies are located in the same area, offer similar products, are of similar size, and precisely because they are in the same area, are exposed to the same customers. The results of this study cannot be extrapolated to companies in other sectors, as the cultural industry has different characteristics from other industries. The cultural companies analysed are more oriented towards niche markets than mass markets. The ways of managing a customer in a cultural company can be very different from the way that same customer is managed when purchasing other types of products (such as mass products or convenience products).

In general, it can be observed that businesspeople have strong entrepreneurial skills and that most of them carried out some kind of analysis before deciding to start a business. This shows their desire to be businesspeople and that this desire is combined with an analysis that allows them to increase the chances of success in their ventures.

The results also highlight several aspects that begin to clarify the direction in which to focus efforts to improve management skills. During the interviews, the responses focused mainly on hard skills, with no mention of soft skills. Responses relating to soft skills might have been expected in cases such as customer management or employee retention, but in general, no such responses were given. A path to improvement can begin by making managers understand the importance of soft skills in today's world of work. It is important to understand what characteristics organisations require of their workers so that, together, they can achieve their strategic business objectives (Atanes Torres et al., 2024 p. 204).

Social media has been mentioned by a significant number of employers as a source of information. While it is true that viewing competitors' official social media accounts can be an important way to find out what they are looking for, it is not necessarily a reliable way to find out industry information. It is necessary to investigate in greater depth what type of social media is used, what specific information is sought, and what type of information filter is used to avoid seeing information that could lead to wrong decisions. The fact that so many responses are oriented towards social media shows the importance that technology and networks are having in doing business. As part of a process of improving management skills, it is important to start addressing technological issues and the proper use of available Internet tools. Social media sites have emerged as fundamental platforms for shaping public discourse, cultural trends, and individual behaviours (García Ull et al., 2024 p. 240), aspects that could be important for businesspeople to consider when venturing decisively into this model.

With regard to customers, there are gaps in understanding customer needs prior to purchase. Businesspeople generally begin to understand their customers' needs at the time of purchase (informal conversations at the time of purchase was the response most frequently mentioned by businesspeople when asked how they learned about customer needs). At the after-sales stage, half of the participants said they did not conduct studies to measure customer satisfaction. Therefore, a path to improvement must include awareness that there are three moments with the customer: before the sale, during the sale, and after the sale. Likewise, aspects related to customer management must be taken into account, with ways to identify their needs and improve after-sales service, showing interest in the person after they have made their purchase.

The cultural industries sector in Bogotá is growing and is becoming an increasingly important player in the economy of the city and the country. Its growth cannot depend solely on the belief that there is a market that can grow and that will become increasingly interested in the type of product (understanding product to mean a good, service, idea or experience), but rather it is necessary for companies to have the capacity to take advantage of these opportunities in the market. To this end, it is important to apply management tools in order to have better resources that allow for a better understanding of the customer, the competition and the sector, and thus be able to grow from within. Having stronger and better-prepared companies benefits the companies themselves, their businesspeople, their workers and society in general. This study hopes to serve as a first step towards strengthening the internal aspects of companies in order to boost their growth and improve their competitiveness.

5. Acknowledgements

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